

A COMPLETE STORY EVERY SATURDAY

The Evening World.

FICTION SECTION

THREE SECTIONS.

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SECTION TWO.

THE PERFECT DAY

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Love, Humor, Mystery and Adventure in the Wild West

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

MISS GERTRUDE LUCRETIA WHEELER—Courtied by numerous young frontiersmen, but showing a preference for one.

MR. TUBS WHEELER, her father; a prosperous land owner and perfectly willing to add to his worldly possessions.

"SPUD" WALLIS, who is deeply interested in Gertie and has some of the characteristics most in favor with her father.

CHARLIE SIMPSON, "Spud's" chum, who is handy when some kinds of jobs are to be done.

JOE HASKELL, "plumb full of ginger and a good looker," standing high in the favor of Mr. Wheeler.

ROBERT WHALEN, "SHRIMP" DWYER and their friend "BILL," all enterprising but none conscientious.

BILL PANKY, whose alias is Old Jim Hendricks.

MR. TUBS WHEELER sat on the shady porch before his store. The store was perched on a wide ridge separating and overlooking two great valleys. From the west a mile of brown river, the Rio Grande, made a dead set at this ridge, turned southward, at right angles, and presently averted to the southeast, leaving behind it a perpendicular bank thirty feet high and half a mile long.

It was some eighty yards from Mr. Wheeler's feet to the precipice, and in those scanty yards a single track railroad, the wagon-road and the big Dona Ana Mother-Ditch crowded, following the river's curve.

Far down the narrow highroad a shod hoof rang on a stone. A string of horses swung jauntily into sight. A tall horseman lolled easily in his saddle.

"Humph! That fool, Spud Wallis!" Wheeler sniffed.

The fool, Spud Wallis, drew rein before the store. He was a tall, raw-boned, broad-shouldered man with a berry-brown face and twinkling blue eyes.

"Know where the Tumble-T wagon is?" asked Spud.

"Left this morning for Point o' Rocks," said Mr. Wheeler shortly.

Mr. Wallis rolled his eye at the sun. "I can terrapin along up there this evenin'." After dinner," he added pointedly.

Mr. Tubbs Wheeler spoke accusingly: "Now, young man, you just natchelly mosey right along out of this!"

"Why, Mis-ter Wheeler! An old-timer like you, and grudge a body a meal's victuals."

"Meal's victuals be blowed!" said Wheeler wrathfully. "I ain't going to have you making up to my girl."

"Oh-h! I see-ee! Gertie?" said Spud. He looked up, frank-eyed. "Say, that's a good idea. I'll go see her right away now!"

Mr. Tubbs Wheeler towered tiptoe. "Look here, Spud—I ain't got anything against you, as a man, but a fellow that wants a wife has got a right to get some stuff together first."

"Well," drawled Spud reflectively, "what's the matter with my little bunch of cows?"

"That's just it. You don't know nawthin' but cows—and cows is nix, nada. That day's over. Summerford, Joe Haskell, Herron—they got farms for themselves ready for the big ditch. Look at Joe Haskell, now. He's got as fine a piece of land as there is in the bend. And when there's no work for him on the farm, he goes teamin' on the dam. There's a forehanded man."

"Yes, Joe stacks up pretty fair—but Joe Haskell don't figure in this case," said Spud. "He likes some one else better than he does Gertie."

"Who?" demanded Mr. Tubbs Wheeler, sharply.

"Why, just himself. So we'll leave him out of the question. And Herron?" Spud said consideringly.

"H'm-m! Well, really—"

"Well, what about Herron? Don't you ever take a drink?"

Spud slid from the saddle. "I don't care if I do," he said.

"You banshee!" cried Wheeler. His scowl ended in a broad grin. "Come along with you."

When they returned to the porch, Spud Wallis sank into a chair.

A touring car stood in the deep road between track and ditch. Two men were on their hands and knees peering

under. A sound of clinking steel came through the heated air.

"I SUPPOSE when that good road gets through to the dam, the cars'll be thicker'n flies," said the young man disconsolately.

Wheeler chuckled. "Do you think they'll build that good road down there, where there's no room, and only

a matter of years till the river gnaws the bank away? No, sir-ee! The Dona Ana Ditch'll go through the hill back of my house, and the good road will go over my hill—that's what. And they'll pay little old Tubbs Wheeler a good big price for a right of way. "Maybe the railroad'll have to move, too, some time. And when Mr. Big Old He-Ditch comes here, Mr. Ditch'll make a big cut—or a tunnel,

maybe—through my old ridge—and there's another right of way. Four—count 'em—four!"

"Jo-ve, Mr. Wheeler, you suhtenly are a wondah!" Spud drawled. "And you want Gertie to have a man that'll cipher out plays like that? What's the matter with that car?" he inquired as the automobile started, then stopped again.

"Lost something, I guess—see 'em



THE OUTLAW PRODDED BILL WITH A GUN MUZZLE. "YOU'LL HAVE US IN THE DITCH! SIT UP, YOU, OR I'LL SHOW YOU TO KINGDOM COME!"